

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-12, and 15-32 are currently pending in this application. Claims 1, 8, 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31, and 32 have been amended to clarify certain features of these claims, and without prejudice to pursuing these claims in unamended or other forms in a continuation or other application. Moreover, claims 19, 22, 24, and 28 have been amended merely to improve the readability of these claims, and not for any reasons related to patentability.

In the Office Action mailed April 18, 2008, pending claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-12, and 15-32 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 12, 15-25, 27, 28, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,798,849 to Tsai ("Tsai") and U.S. Patent No. 5,535,021 to Chiang et al. ("Chiang"); and

(B) Claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C §103(a) over the combination of Tsai, Chiang, and U.S. Patent No. 6,827,457 to Umemoto et al. ("Umemoto").

The undersigned attorney and his colleague, Cameron Pilling, wish to thank the Examiner for engaging in a telephone conference on June 13, 2008, to discuss the present Office Action, the applied references, and the pending claims. During the course of the telephone conference, the undersigned attorney and the Examiner discussed some of the distinctions between the pending claims and the teachings of the applied references. The following remarks summarize and expand upon the results of the June 13th telephone conference. Accordingly, the applicants request that this paper constitute the applicants' Interview Summary. If the Examiner notices any deficiencies in this regard, he is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney to correct such deficiencies.

A. Response to the Section 103 Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 12, 15-25, 27, 28, and 31 (Tsai and Chiang)

Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 12, 15-25, 27, 28, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Tsai and Chiang. The undersigned attorney thanks the Examiner for providing a detailed explanation of his position regarding this combination of references during the June 13th telephone conference. For at least the reasons explained below, however, the applied references cannot support a Section 103 rejection of claims 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 12, 15-25, 27, 28, and 31.

As discussed during the June 13th telephone conference, the applied references Tsai and Chiang, individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest several features of claim 1. For example, Tsai fails to disclose or suggest that "the spreading plate includes a plurality of uncovered perforations," as recited in claim 1. Rather, Tsai discloses a multilevel light source including light dispersion plates 6, 7 secured on slots 5 in a web medium 4. (See, e.g., Tsai, 2:13-15, 3:53-54, and Figure 2.) Moreover, as discussed during the June 13th telephone conference, Chiang fails to cure the above-noted deficiencies of Tsai to support a *prima facie* Section 103 rejection of claim 1. For example, Chiang discloses a light diffusing device 20 including a light diffusing member 22 covering an aperture 30 in a seat 24 supporting a light source 28. (Chiang, 4:49-61 and Figure 1.) Therefore, for at least the foregoing reasons, these references fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of claim 1, and the Section 103 rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

Claims 2, 4-7, 11, and 12 depend from base claim 1. Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 2, 4-7, 11, and 12 should be withdrawn for at least the reasons discussed above with reference to base claim 1, and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

Independent claims 15, 27, and 31 include several features generally similar to those of claim 1 (e.g., a spreading plate having a plurality of uncovered perforations). Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 15, 27, and 31 should be withdrawn

for at least the reasons discussed above with reference to claim 1, and for the additional features of these independent claims.

Claims 16-20 and 30 depend from base claim 15, and claims 28 and 29 depend from base claim 27. Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 16-20 and 28-30 should be withdrawn for at least the reasons discussed above with reference to their respective base claims, and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

As also discussed during the June 13th telephone conference, the applied references Tsai and Chiang fail to disclose or suggest several features of independent claim 20. For example, as discussed during the June 13th telephone conference, the applied references Tsai and Chiang, individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest that "the spreading plate includes a plurality of perforations including a first group of perforations less densely distributed than a second group of perforations," as recited in claim 20. Rather, as corrected noted in the Office Action, "[t]he combination [of Tsai and Chiang] does not explicitly disclose two groups of perforations." (Office Action, pg. 5; bracketed information added.)

To cure the above-noted deficiencies of Tsai and Chiang, the Office Action relies on Umemoto for disclosing a light pipe having grooves arranged more densely on the side than those arranged on the center portion. (Office Action, pg. 5.) Even assuming for the sake of argument that this is correct (and the applicants explicitly do not), one skilled in the art would not modify either Tsai or Chiang according to the teachings of Umemoto, because such a modification would frustrate at least one purpose of these references. For example, Tsai and Chiang each teach using multiple glass, plastic, or acrylic light diffusing plates of different transmittance to achieve a varying degree of transmitted light. (See, e.g., Tsai, 3:38-67 and light dispensing plates 6, 7 of Figure 2; Chiang, 4:49-5:12 and tiered plates 34 of Figure 1.) Forming a plurality of perforations of different densities in these plates, or in the support members holding these plates, may adversely affect the amount of light transmitted through these plates that have been formed from specific materials and arranged to achieve particular transmittances.

Therefore, the combination of Tsai, Chiang, and Umemoto fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of claim 20, and the Section 103(a) rejection of claim 20 should be withdrawn.

Claims 21-25 depend from base claim 20. Accordingly, the Section 103(a) rejection of claims 21-25 should be withdrawn for at least the reasons discussed above with reference to base claim 20, and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

B. Response to the Section 103 Rejection of Claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32 (Tsai, Chiang, and Umemoto)

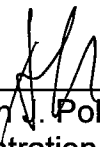
Claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C §103(a) over the combination of Tsai, Chiang, and Umemoto. Claims 8 and 10 depend from base claim 1, claim 26 depends from base claim 20, claim 29 depends from base claim 27, claim 30 depends from base claim 15, and claim 32 depends from base claim 31. As discussed above, Tsai and Chiang fail to support a Section 103 rejection of base claims 1, 15, 20, 27, and 31. Moreover, Umemoto fails to cure the above-noted deficiencies of Tsai and Chiang to support a Section 103 rejection of base claims 1, 15, 20, 27, and 31. Accordingly, claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32 are allowable over the combination of Tsai, Chiang, and Umemoto for at least the reason that these references, either alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest the features of base claims 1, 15, 20, 27, and 31, and the additional features of dependent claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32. Therefore, the Section 103(a) rejection of dependent claims 8, 10, 26, 29, 30, and 32 should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a mailing of a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Cameron Pilling at (206) 359-6123.

Respectfully submitted,
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